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9 December 1953

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ARMY and DOS review(s) completed.

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GENERAL

1. India plans to release Korean prisoners after 22 January:

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After consultation with Prime Minister Nehru, Foreign Secretary Pillai has confirmed to Ambassador Allen that India is planning to return the remaining prisoners in Korea to the original retaining sides if no other disposition is agreed on prior to 22 January.

General Thimayya, head of the custodial forces, told an American military officer on 6 December that he would withdraw the guards from the enclosures after 22 January unless both sides agree that the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission should continue to maintain custody of the prisoners.

Comment: India has shifted from its earlier view that the release of the prisoners would be contingent on the holding of a political conference. It may, however, attempt to have the UN General Assembly reconvened to consider the problem, in which case support for the prisoners' release seems assured.

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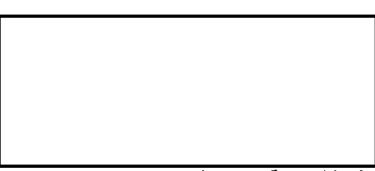
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FAR EAST

3. Japan seen unable to accept US defense goals:

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Ambassador Allison believes that the Japanese public's apprehension of a rapid military build-up and the government's vulnerability to leftist attack on rearmament make it impractical for Tokyo to accept the minimum defense goal for 1957 of a 325,000-man ground force as proposed by the United States. He doubts that the government can be persuaded to revise substantially the defense program it has informally presented to the United States, which provides for a 180,000-man ground force.

In view of the recent progress toward conservative unity, Allison thinks that encouragement of a prompt build-up from the present 110,000-man force might lead the Japanese government to adopt a more realistic defense policy.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

4. Navarre discounts possibility of negotiations with Viet Minh:

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General Navarre told Ambassador Heath in Saigon on 6 December that he is not worried over Ho Chi Minh's peace offer

which appeared in the Swedish press, as there are "no practical possibilities of negotiating peace" now. Heath concurs in this view.

Navarre believes the peace feeler may have a salutary effect in causing the Vietnamese to think more seriously about their danger and the necessity of agreeing to some form of association with France which would justify the latter in continuing its efforts in Indochina.

Comment: It would be virtually impossible for the French to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh without the full participation of the Vietnamese government, which is strongly opposed to such a course.

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6. Strife in Indonesian armed forces reportedly sharpening:

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There are increasing signs of an approaching political and military "eruption" in Indonesia,

This deteriorating situation has been aggravated by the activities of the Moscow-trained minister of defense, who was hand-picked by President Sukarno for his job.

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This official is reorganizing the Ministry of Defense in order to obtain control over the armed forces and has appointed three suspected Communists as deputy chiefs of staff.

Sharpening disagreement in the armed forces between those who favor a nonpolitical military establishment and those who support Sukarno in his desire for a "people's" army loyal primarily to himself, is leading steadily toward civil war. It is uncertain whether opposition political groups can bring about a change in government peacefully before the military resorts to force.

Comment: The American ambassador in Djakarta reported on 4 December that there was ample evidence of dissatisfaction among some army circles with the defense minister's appointments, policies and programs. He also stated that the recent movement of artillery and heavy equipment out of Djakarta could have been in preparation for an army coup. Anti-Communist political leaders, however, have reportedly been trying to dissuade their military contacts from taking overt action for at least six months.